Wildlife Management

Land disposal actions would reduce big game winter range by 2,658 acres and sage and sharp-tailed grouse habitat by 1,570 and 120 acres, respectively. Anticipated improvements in range condition from proposed range management changes would offset any loss from land disposals and increase the amount of winter range in satisfactory condition by 4,131 acres. This would allow an increase of 27 elk and 357 deer over Alternative A. These numbers would exceed the BLM's proportion of the Idaho Fish and Game 5-year management goals by 4.6 percent. Bitterbrush planting on 417 acres of declining winter range would improve carrying capacity, although not necessarily improve the condition class.

Approximately 1,730 acres of sage and sharp-tailed grouse habitat would be lost because of land disposals. Proposed allotment management plans utilizing grazing systems and range improvements anticipate an improvement in range condition from fair to good on 12,744 acres. This would be an increase in condition for 3,200 acres, or 4 percent, in the amount of satisfactory habitat. A more consistent water supply would be provided on 4,000 acres of sage grouse and non-game habitat on the Bear Lake Plateau by installing two 500-gallon guzzlers.

Six miles of fence modifications to ease big game movements on winter range will have a beneficial, but insignificant impact.

Six goose nest platforms and improved riparian conditions resulting from more intense livestock management should increase local goose population. Some field observation have shown an increase of almost 2 geese per platform over ground nesting birds.

Impacts from oil, gas, and geothermal exploration operations would be considered insignificant due to the restrictions and standard stipulations currently attached to exploration permits.

Positive impacts on wildlife from ORV closures are hard to define as they relate to kilocalories of energy saved in avoiding ORV users. It is assumed that energy saved results in increased survival, particularly during winter.

The range program is proposing 11,240 acres of brush control to increase livestock forage production. The proposed projects will affect 2,268 acres of big game winter range and 2,380 acres of sage grouse habitat. The impacts of the projects would be partially beneficial, e.g., increased grass and forb production, and partially adverse, e.g., loss of cover and forage.

Recreation and Visual Resources

Adoption of the proposed ORV designations, visual resource management classes and Special Recreation Management area designations would enhance recreation opportunities and use. Table 4.2 lists visitor use day estimates for selected recreation activities in the PRA for this Alternative.
Dispersed recreational ORV use would continue at the same level as in Alternative A with a slight increase resulting from improved access. Additional restrictions on ORV use to protect soil and watershed values, cultural sites, and big game winter range would not adversely impact ORV use. Most of the motorized recreation use occurs on established roads and trails, and designations would not change this trend. Over-snow closures to protect wintering wildlife would have an insignificant affect on snowmobiling because numerous opportunities are available outside of the closure areas.

The number of developed recreation sites would increase by eight. These developments would help meet approximately one percent of the identified camping needs for the seven counties in the PRA (1983 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan). Overall, site construction and development would increase recreation use of the public lands by an estimated 1,500 visitor use days. This increase would represent less than one percent of the total recreation use in the PRA. No mineral withdrawals are proposed for developed or potential recreation sites because the known mineral values are minimal. The potential loss of facilities to mining and mineral leasing activities is considered slight.

The Pocatello and Blackfoot River Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) would be designated under this Alternative. Emphasis would be given to managing ORV use in the Pocatello SRMA and water-based recreation in the Blackfoot River SRMA. A positive impact to recreation would result because priority for recreation funding, management, and staffing would be placed on the areas.

Visual resource management classes would be established as in Alternative A (refer to SOP, Visual Resources, Part I). A slight impact to visual resources is anticipated under this Alternative.

Recreation opportunities would remain on lands retained in Federal ownership. Public recreation uses would be eliminated on lands that are disposed of, except when transferred to another public agency. The proposed disposals that would eliminate general public use would have only a slight impact on recreation opportunities. Proposed acquisition of lands along the Blackfoot River would have a positive impact on recreation. Blocking up Federal ownership would secure public access and use of the river system. Primary emphasis would be placed on managing those lands for recreation under the Blackfoot River SRMA.

Restrictions on right-of-way development would have a positive impact on visual resources. Utility corridors would not be constructed in areas of high scenic value. These include the Blackfoot River, Wolverine Canyon, Garden Creek, Grays Lake, Petticoat Peak, and proposed ACECs and RNAs.

The removal of timber and associated activities such as road building would improve access for recreationists. Generally, improved access would shift recreation opportunities and uses to less primitive forms. Hunting could increase slightly with better vehicle access as could motorized recreation and wood gathering. Most impacts would be slight because of the small areas that would involve intensive forest management practices. However, a considerable impact would result in the Petticoat Peak area, if Congress decides that the area will not be designated as wilderness. Consequently, 2,559 acres of commercial timber would be available for sale. Removal of the timber and associated activities would impact both recreation opportunities and visual resources (see Eastern Idaho Wilderness EIS).

Cultural resource designations and management of specific sites for their educational, recreational, and interpretive values would have a positive impact to recreation use. Visitors will gain an appreciation and awareness of historic and prehistoric values of the public lands, thereby enhancing most recreation activities near cultural sites.

Management actions to improve stream conditions and fisheries would have a positive impact on fishing opportunities and use. Stream improvements, particularly for the Blackfoot River, would improve fish production. An estimated increase of 2,300 visitor use days of fishing use would result.

Proposed fencing of developed campgrounds would have a positive impact on recreation use. Conflicts between livestock and recreationists would be significantly reduced.

Management actions to improve wildlife habitat would have a positive impact on big game hunting. Deer and elk populations would be increased slightly. An increase of 348 visitor use days of hunting would result. Over-snow ORV closures of areas where big game winter would have a slight adverse impact on winter recreation use. Abundant opportunities exist for snowmobile use outside of wildlife winter range.

There would be no impacts under Alternative B to recreation use and visual resources from soils and watershed management actions where soil erosion rates are less than 5 tons/acre.

Mining and mineral leasing activities would impact dispersed recreation by disrupting the natural appearance of the landscape and shifting the recreational opportunity setting from the more natural appearing to the developed type. However, since the extent, location, and nature of future operations is not known, the actual impacts cannot be predicted. In general, mineral leasing impacts to recreation and visual resources would be lessened

because of restrictions and stipulations on leasing activities. Streams and other water resources of recreational and scenic value, parks, and other recreation areas would be protected from leasing activities with a NSO stipulation. Overall, the impacts to recreation and visual resources from mining and mineral leasing activities would be slight to moderate.

Obtaining and improving public access to public lands and marking boundaries would have a beneficial impact on recreational opportunities over the long-term. Right-of-way and easement acquisition to approximately 37,300 acres of landlocked public lands would ensure access for hunting, fishing, and other activities. Problems with trespass would diminish and visitor management would be improved. Overall, more recreational opportunities would be provided on lands not being used because of access problems.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)

Under this Alternative, the Stump Creek, Downey Watershed, and Travertine Park ACECs would be designated, totaling 4,506 acres of public land. Priority for management would be given to the three areas.

ORV designations would restrict motorized recreational use to existing roads and trails in all three areas. The ORV designations would protect the resources and values of the areas. Therefore, ORV use would not have any measurable impact on the three ACECs. Restrictions on grazing and proposed fencing would minimize or eliminate adverse grazing impacts to the three ACECs.

Mining and mineral leasing activities would be restricted in the ACEC designation areas. NSO stipulations would be applied to the three areas for leasable energy minerals, and the Travertine Park and Stump Creek areas would be closed to non-energy leasables. The Downey Watershed is closed to mining claims, and the low to moderate potential for locatables in the Stump Creek and Travertine Park areas indicate that mining claim location may not take place. All three areas are closed to salable minerals in this Alternative. No measurable impacts from mining and mineral leasing activities are anticipated from this Alternative.

Research Natural Area (RNAs)

RNA designations would be made for all seven of the proposed RNAs, totaling 1,494 acres. Plant associations of state and national importance would be protected through designation and other management actions.

ORV use would be prohibited in all RNA proposals in this Alternative, which would eliminate possible adverse impacts to plant communities from motorized travel. The result would be a positive impact on remnant plants.

Livestock grazing would be eliminated from the Dairy Hollow, Pine Gap, and Travertine Park by fencing the areas. Changes in plant composition and cover would be left to natural processes resulting in a positive impact to the proposed RNAs. The remaining four RNA proposals are generally inaccessible to livestock grazing and impacts to plant communities are anticipated to be slight.

Under this Alternative, the NSO stipulation on leasable mineral activity and closure to salables in the RNA proposals would prevent impacts from occurring to plant communities. These actions to eliminate mineral leasing and material mining would result in a positive impact on the RNAs. High potential for locatable minerals is found in the Oneida Narrows and Robbers Roost areas and impacts would be moderate to considerable from mining activities. Impacts from locatable mining activities to the remaining RNA proposals are considered slight because the unlikely presence of valuable minerals.

Cultural Resource Management

Adverse cultural resource impacts would be reduced or moderated. Cultural resource losses would continue, but loss rates would be slowed. Localized and dispersed impacts would be reduced, but not eliminated. A balanced approach to natural resource management would reduce cultural resource mitigation workloads, and should reduce inadvertent cultural resource site damage and destruction.

Standard operating procedures would mitigate anticipated short-term impacts from mineral, lands, wildlife, and forestry activities. Proposed range improvement projects could have significant short-term impacts. Standard operation procedures would mitigate localized impacts of water developments and fences. But brush control and seeding projects would have dispersed impacts that would be difficult to mitigate. Temporary ground cover elimination would expose surface sites to erosion and unauthorized artifact removal. Livestock trampling would also increase. Acres closed and limited to wheeled ORV use and operation would increase 55 per cent. This would reduce some ORV impacts on cultural resource sites. Anticipated long-term impacts would not be severe or significant. Standard inventory, evaluation, and mitigation procedures would minimize localized impacts' adverse effects. Activity plans would mitigate localized, non-project related impacts. Impacts mitigation would favor site avoidance over salvage. This would reduce irretrieable and irreversible cultural resource commitments.

Cultural resource management plan preparation and implementation would have high priority. Activity plans would protect 35 documented prehistoric and historic sites on 8,740 acres. NSO designations would protect 2,050 acres. Sensitive area designations would limit other natural resource program activities on 6,690 acres (refer to Table S.1). Management plans would evaluate site condition and recommend protective measures. Plan objectives would include elimination of ongoing adverse impacts, and reduce vandalism and

unauthorized use. Plans would also allocate cultural resources for socio-cultural, scientific, educational, and management uses. A management plan has been prepared, approved, and implemented for the Oregon Trail.

Forest Management

Under Alternative B, 11,369 acres of commercial forest land would be available for restricted forest management. An additional 808 acres would be available with no restrictions. Lands managed to enhance other uses would total 1,078 acres. This would result in a potential sustainable allowable cut of approximately 3.7 MMBF per decade. Also, under this Alternative, 38,011 acres of woodland would be available for the limited harvest of minor forest products. This would include sales of posts/poles, firewood, and hobby wood.

Harvest practices such as clearcut, shelterwood, and selective cut would influence the amount of vegetation cover on approximately 50 acres each year. These harvest activities would benefit forest resources by regenerating the stand, reducing insects and disease through removal of infected trees, and improving growth and production of residual trees.

Forest development practices such as thinning, planting, and use of herbicides would be implemented on available commercial forest lands. The beneficial impact of these silvicultural techniques would be improved stocking levels and growth rates and a decrease in insect and disease problems.

Under this Alternative, 1,248 acres of commercial forest land would be removed from the timber base due to proposed land sale or exchanges under the lands and realty program. Approximately 156 acres of woodland would also be removed from the woodland base for the same reason. Juniper cutting areas proposed in the soils program would remove an additional 500 acres from the woodland base. The reduction in commercial forest land would have a small adverse impact on the availability of sawtimber, fuelwood, and other forest products resulting in a reduction of the annual allowable cut by less than 10 percent.

Grazing would influence forest management activities by endangering the establishment of regeneration. This influence can be partially mitigated through control of season of use and livestock distribution.

Riparian and Water Quality

Road, drill pad construction for oil and gas exploration, and phosphate mining would adversely effect surface water by changing flow patterns and water quality. Increased runoff and erosion on disturbed land would cause some increased rates of suspended and bed load-sediment transport in stream channels.

Timber sale activity would increase erosion and cause a subsequent increase in sedimentation in streams and a decrease in water quality, mainly from road building activity.

Under this Alternative, the limited amounts of surface disturbance and the use of best management practices and standard operating procedures, in conjunction with mineral development and timber harvesting, would result in decreases in sedimentation of streams and increases in water quality so small that they would not be distinguished from the normal observed seasonal fluctuations.

By the use of standard operating procedures and best management practices (see Part I), the BLM will meet or exceed Idaho State water quality standards. Monitoring will be conducted to check compliance and effectiveness of these practices and procedures, and they would be refined and modified to protect beneficial uses such as fisheries and drinking water.

Under this Alternative, 7.31 miles of riparian habitat would be proposed for disposal. This is approximately 5 percent of the riparian habitat in the PRA. Of this number, 3.65 miles were inventoried and found to be in fair to good condition. In addition, 40 acres of marsh-wetland and 3.3 acres of Bear Lake shoreline would be proposed for disposal.

Riparian vegetation, water quality, and streambank condition were factors considered in evaluating riparian habitat. Recommended management options would be implemented on "Improve" allotments and on stream segments contiguous to "Improve" allotments; however, not all riparian areas in "Improve" allotments require management changes. A total of 20.15 miles of stream would be managed to improve riparian habitat. These streams have a potential to be improved through grazing management and represent 59 percent of the miles of riparian habitat with potential to be improved. This would include constructing 8.25 miles of fence and limiting utilization on key riparian vegetative species to 50 percent.

A total of 70.89 miles of riparian area would be managed to maintain existing riparian values. Some of these streams may be in "Improve" allotments, but require no management changes. Other streams which are in "Maintain" or "Custodial" allotments do not require fencing to improve stream quality because this riparian habitat is in stable condition.

Under this Alternative, 2.75 miles of riparian habitat would deteriorate in condition. This is because the BLM has limited ownership in these watersheds, stream segments are short (less than one mile), and the poor conditions are often caused by land management practices on private lands adjacent to these parcels. The management decision is not to invest funds on these allotments, but to intensively manage the allotments with higher resource values in order to improve them. In some cases, livestock use could be reduced and the condition of riparian zones would improve; however, the size of these parcels within the total allotments make this impractical to do.

See Appendix C for a listing of streams and their condition.

In general, impacts to water quality, fisheries habitat, and riparian habitat from surface disturbing activities such as mining, timber harvesting, and road construction can be mitigated on a site-specific basis through the application of standard operating procedures and general best management practices.

Impacts to riparian zones, due to heavy grazing by livestock, can be reduced by elimination of season long grazing, especially grazing of riparian areas in the months of June, July, and August. If grazing is allowed during the hot growing season, utilization of key riparian species should be limited to 50 percent.

Approximately 16.6 miles of fishery streams, or 32 percent of fishery streams inventoried, would be expected to improve; 1.05 miles would continue to deteriorate; and 34.17 miles would remain unchanged.

Soils and Watershed Management

About 7,200 acres of unallotted grazing lands would be allotted under this Alternative. This would increase overall erosion, but this additional erosion is expected to be kept within tolerable limits by proper stocking rates and grazing management systems.

About 40,000 acres of public lands having soils sensitive to erosion are subject to indiscriminate use by ORVs in this Alternative. This includes the 8,500 acres in the Pocatello Off-Road-Vehicle Plan for Bannock County.

Oil and gas exploration activity on sensitive soils would be controlled by special stipulations and provisionary options provided for in the seasonal and standard lease stipulations.

About 500 acres of juniper thinning would stimulate understory plant growth and reduce annual erosion rates to less than 5 tons per acre per year.

Reduction of grazing on 360 acres of ashy soil in allotments 4062 and 4075 subject to high erosion rates would occur if monitoring shows erosion rates of more than 5 tons per acre per year.

Reclamation of 224 acres of Woodall Mountain mining area would stabilize mine tailings and reduce erosion rates.

About 867 acres of agriculture trespass lands would be restored to native range, thereby reducing erosion by several tons per acre per year.

About 808 acres of scattered commercial forest without restricted management practices would have some short-term and long-term erosion impacts. These impacts would be mitigated after a site-specific environmental assessment is prepared.

Full fire suppression for the PRA gives the area the best option for reduced erosion following wildfires.

Several land treatment improvements are planned for this Alternative. Brush control by fire or range plowing would have high soil erosion impacts, both short and long-term, on 4,000 acres and moderate-to-high impacts on 7,240 acres. Brush control by spraying or other mechanical means would have moderate soil erosion impacts on 4,000 acres and slight-to-moderate impacts on 7,240 acres of land under this Alternative.

Plowing and seeding of 120 acres in the Aspen Road allotment, which is part of the 11,240 acres identified above, would have high short-term erosion impacts. Planned plowing and seeding in all other allotments would have moderate-to-high short-term erosion effects and slight-to-moderate long-term effects, measured in tons per acre per year erosion.

Small wildlife and range development improvements would generally have only limited short-term erosion impacts. The impacts on sensitive soil areas along with mitigation measures to reduce these impacts would be addressed in individual activity plans and environmental assessments as the RMP is implemented.

Economic Conditions

Native Americans

There would be no economic impact on Native Americans with this Alternative.

Minerals

This Alternative would have no economic impact on the minerals industry in the economic region.

Livestock

Initially, there would be 29,969 AUMs available for livestock under this Alternative. This would generate direct earnings of $649,300. The total economic impact would be $1.7 million (including the multiplier effect). These levels of earnings would represent 0.6 and 0.1 percent, respectively, of the farm and total earnings (1983) in the PRA.

This level of AUMs would generate direct employment of 28 jobs. Including the multiplier effect, the total number of jobs generated would be 82.

In the short-term, there would be a gain of capital value of between $46,000 and $205,000.

In the long-term (15 years), there would be 34,276 AUMs available for livestock under this Alternative. This would generate direct earnings of $742,600. The total economic impact would be $1.9 million (including the multiplier effect). These would represent 0.7 and 0.1 percent, respectively, of the 1983 farm and total PRA earnings.

This level of AUMs would generate direct employment of 32 jobs. Including the multiplier effect, the total number of jobs generated would be 94.

In the long-term, there would be a gain of capital value of between $285,000 and $1.3 million.

Appendix E shows how these earnings, employment, and capital value estimates were made.

Recreation

Recreation activities would generate expenditures of $1.9 million with this Alternative. Utilizing the earnings to gross output ratio for the retail trade industry, this would convert to direct earnings of $743,500. This would represent 0.6 percent of the PRA retail trade earnings. The multiplier effect would increase total earnings to $1.6 million. This would be 0.1 percent of the total PRA earnings.

The direct earnings would generate 68 jobs in the retail trade industry, while the total earnings would account for 117 jobs spread throughout the local economy. Appendix E shows how these earnings and employment estimates were made.

Lumber and Wood Products

Under this Alternative, there would be 370 thousand board feet of timber harvested annually. This would lead to direct earnings of $88,500. This would represent 0.06 percent of the 1983 PRA manufacturing earnings. The total earnings (including the multiplier effect) would be $195,900, which would be 0.01 percent of PRA earnings in 1983.

Direct employment generated would be three jobs. Including the multiplier effect, the total employment generated would be seven jobs.

Project Costs

Range improvements necessary to implement this Alternative would cost $210,200. Wildlife improvements would cost $75,200. The cost of constructing recreation facilities (recreation sites, multiple use trails) would be $79,600 with this Alternative. The total cost of these improvements would be $365,100.